

VZCZCXRO0875

RR RUEHBC RUEHDIR RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2234/01 2001226
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 181226Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8371
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0072

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002234

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2018

TAGS: PREL PHUM PINS PTER ICRC I2

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES WAY AHEAD ON MUJAHEDIN
E-KHALQ (MEK) WITH ICRC IRAQ HEAD

REF: BAGHDAD 2105

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met July 9 with the Head of the Iraq Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Juan-Pedro Schaerer, to discuss a way ahead on the status of the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) at Camp Ashraf. The ICRC is consulting with USG and GOI stakeholders and appears willing to explore a role in monitoring Ashraf to ensure humane treatment of residents after the transfer of authority from MNF-I to GOI. Schaerer has requested a meeting with MEK leadership in Baghdad and hopes to visit the camp before the end of July if secure travel can be arranged.

ICRC plans to visit Ashraf independently at first, but would be agreeable to subsequent joint visits with Minister of Human Rights Wijdan. The ICRC also plans to hold discussions with MEK leadership regarding family visits to MEK members in the camp. END SUMMARY.

Baghdad Meetings

¶2. (C) Juan-Pedro Schaerer, Head of the Iraq Delegation of the ICRC met with Ambassador July 9 at Embassy to discuss an increased role for the ICRC in Iraq, much of which centered on the future of the MEK in Iraq. Also present were Laurent Saugy, ICRC Iraq Delegation Protection Coordinator; POL/MIL Counselor and Deputy Counselor; Senior Refugee/IDP Coordinator; and POL/MIL Officer (notetaker). Schaerer was in Baghdad to discuss a way ahead on the MEK with USG and GOI stakeholders including the Ambassador, MNF-I, the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR), Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Prime Minister Salih. Although Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim is currently out of the country (see reftel), the ICRC planned to meet with ministry staff July 10. Schaerer told Ambassador that the Minister is comfortable discussing the MEK, and that she knows that it is not a "one-day solution."

Unilateral Meetings with the MEK

¶3. (C) Noting that the MEK are calling ICRC on a daily basis, Schaerer told Ambassador that he was working with MNF-I to arrange a meeting with MEK leaders in Baghdad on July 20 or ¶21. ICRC was working to arrange a visit to Camp Ashraf within the month. ICRC plans to conduct this visit unilaterally, without USG or GOI partnership. They plan to explain the ICRC position that the ICRC must talk with individuals without MEK leadership present, during their visit. He hoped they would be able to meet with some. Schaerer intended to impress on the MEK leadership that the principle of non-refoulement can only apply to individuals. It is not a collective concept. Noting that RDML Wright, of Task Force 134, was planning to organize a census of the

Ashraf population, Schaerer wondered whether it would be possible to find a way in that process to question individuals about their desires. Illustrating the control exerted by the MEK leadership, Schaerer said that ICRC had stopped delivering family messages to Ashraf because they believed they were not being delivered to the addressees. Schaerer noted that the timing of the visit will depend on finding safe air and ground travel routes to the camp. He said ICRC would notify MNF-I of its movement plans in advance. After the initial visit, Schaerer said he would be prepared for joint visits with GOI and USG representatives. At the same time, Schaerer stressed ICRC's sensitivity about not wanting to be seen as an implementing agency of the U.S. and Iraqi governments. He added that he does not want ICRC's activities publicly mentioned without advance consultation with ICRC. Ambassador replied that he thought that the GOI's mention of ICRC had been with good intentions to show its assurance to adherence to international standards.

No Reports of Trouble for Returnees to Iran

¶4. (C) Schaerer told Ambassador that the ICRC has had discussions with the Government of Iran regarding the return of MEK members to Iran and noted that, to the ICRC's knowledge, none of the former MEK members who have returned to Iran have reported problems. Schaerer noted that six of the Ashraf Refugee Camp (ARC) refugees who moved to the KRG had recently returned voluntarily without ICRC assistance to Iran. Eight other former ARC residents had met with the Iranian Consul in Erbil as had ICRC. At the same time,

BAGHDAD 00002234 002 OF 002

Schaerer said that many returnees prefer not to have contact with the ICRC and that none were of the "Top 40-50" members whom the Iranian authorities have expressed interest in prosecuting.

Transfer of Authority Timeline

¶5. (C) Responding to a question regarding a possible timeline for the transfer of authority over the camp from MNF-I to the GOI, Ambassador told Schaerer that that the USG must receive assurances from the GoI regarding the treatment of Ashraf residents before transferring control of the camp to the GOI.

Schaerer responded by noting that the Prime Minister's office told him that assurances would not be a problem.

Family Visits

¶6. (C) Regarding family visits to MEK members at Camp Ashraf, Schaerer told Ambassador that he plans to raise the issue with MEK leadership during his upcoming visit. In response to Schaerer's question as to whether the USG could find countries for resettlement, Ambassador noted the USG had tried everything possible, but that it could be worth additional effort if there were some indications of willingness on the part of resettlement countries. Schaerer responded by submitting that France might be a possibility for resettlement. However, the Ambassador noted that France may oppose an EU effort to de-list the MEK. Ambassador stated that the U.S. could not resettle former MEK members.

Comment

¶7. (C) This was a positive meeting, noteworthy for Schaerer's expressions of interest in continuing to work closely albeit quietly with the USG and GOI to seek humane treatment and resolution of the status of the MEK members inside Iraq. It

appears that the organization is willing to consider a role in monitoring at Ashraf to ensure humanitarian treatment when the GoI takes on a more direct role at the camp.

CROCKER